

# QUALITY COUNTS



FALL 2007

## N.C. Food and Nutrition Services Program is a National Star



Pictured (left to right): Adonica Hampton, Assistant Chief of Economic Services; Robin Register, Assistant Chief of Performance Management and Reporting; Jane Schwartz, retired Chief of Economic Services; Diane Gridley, Food and Nutrition Services and Energy Programs Representative; and Pat Moore, Quality Control Administrator.

North Carolina's Food Stamp program (now known as Food and Nutrition Services) was a shining star at the annual U. S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service Awards Dinner and Ceremony in Atlanta on June 5. North Carolina was the recipient of the top award and two other awards when USDA presented its "Starring in Public Service" awards.

The premier award, the 2007 Director Cup Award, recognizes excellence in the areas of payment accuracy, claims management, and program access, which includes participation and application timeliness measurements. North Carolina performed with excellence in each of these program areas. North Carolina was first in the Region to collect claims from multiple debtors, thus making North Carolina the leader in reducing its over-issuance debt.

For its commitment to accuracy and integrity, North Carolina also earned the QC Star Award. This award is presented annually to one state in each region. This award is determined by weighing measurable standards of excellence in the quality control arena. The criteria for this award includes transmission timeliness, case completion rates, the correctness of case reviews, and the validity of data transmitted to the Food Stamp Quality Control System. Last year, the excellence of North Carolina's efforts was reflected by its receipt of \$6.6 million in bonus for a payment error rate of 2.97 percent, the fifth best in the nation.

The Regional Financial Management Award recognized North Carolina for having the most accurate initial budget projection. For Fiscal year 2006, North Carolina's initial Food Stamp Program budget was within one percent of the final expenditures.

Sincere thanks to all DSS employees for their contribution towards North Carolina's achievements of excellence.

### SAVE THE DATES

- ◆ October 8, 2007, Payment Accuracy Cumberland County
- ◆ October 9, 2007 Payment Accuracy Martin County
- ◆ October 23, 2007 Payment Accuracy Rowan County
- ◆ October 24, 2007 Payment Accuracy McDowell County
- ◆ April 15-18, 2008 Program Integrity Conference, Asheville
- ◆ June 4-6, 2008 Food and Nutrition Services Conference, Greensboro

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## **Active Case Error Rates**



The following counties have maintained a 100% Active case error rate for the QC review period  
of October 2006 - April 2007

Alexander	Dare	Lincoln	Rockingham
Anson	Davie	Madison	Rowan
Ashe	Duplin	Martin	Rutherford
Beaufort	Durham	McDowell	Sampson
Bertie	Edgecombe	Montgomery	Scotland
Bladen	Franklin	Moore	Stanly
Buncombe	Graham	Nash	Stokes
Burke	Granville	New Hanover	Surry
Cabarrus	Greene	Northampton	Swain
Carteret	Halifax	Onslow	Transylvania
Caswell	Harnett	Pasquotank	Tyrell
Catawba	Henderson	Pender	Union
Chatham	Hertford	Perquimans	Vance
Cherokee	Hoke	Person	Watauga
Chowan	Jackson	Polk	Wayne
Cleveland	Johnston	Randolph	Wilson
Columbus	Lee	Richmond	Yadkin
Currituck	Lenoir	Robeson	Yancey

**Active Case Errors Reviewed**  
**October 2006 - April 2007**

**Counties with No Active Cases Reviewed**  
**October 2006 - April 2007**

County	Accuracy Rate
Alamance	95.48%
Brunswick	97.17%
Caldwell	97.31%
Craven	93.78%
Cumberland	97.31%
Davidson	88.02%
Forsyth	98.14%
Gaston	95.39%
Guilford	99.39%
Haywood	90.68%
Iredell	88.21%
Macon	85.81%
Mecklenburg	95.83%
Orange	95.47%
Pitt	98.41%
Wake	93.89%
Warren	60.93%
Wilkes	49.42%

Alleghany	Hyde
Avery	Jones
Camden	Mitchell
Clay	Pamlico
Gates	Washington

**State Active Case Error Rate**  
**October 2006 – April 2007**

**2.03%**

**Great job on our  
State Active Case Error Rate!**





## Quality Control Synopsis

Below are examples of Active Case Errors cited by Quality Control.

1. The recipient reported Child Support Income which the agency verified in ACTS from On Line Verification. However, the agency did not include the Child Support Income on the DSS-8590 resulting in an Agency Error overissuance.
2. The recipient provided two wage stubs from the base period and two wage stubs from prior months. The agency used the information provided to calculate monthly income. The employer verified higher wages for the weeks of the base period the recipient withheld. Because the agency used wage stubs outside the base period, the overissuance is an Agency Error.
3. The recipient provided undated pay stubs for wage verification. The employer provided a statement verifying more work hours than the undated pay stubs. The agency used the undated pay stubs to calculate monthly income when they should have verified actual wages for the base period. Because actual wages during the base period were much more than the stubs represented, a large agency error overissuance occurred.
4. The recipient reported and the agency correctly calculated the earned income of a two person household. However, the agency did not enter the correct income on the DSS-8590. The earned income from the prior certification period was left on the DSS-8590 resulting in an agency error underissuance.
5. A four person household has a head of household that works and receives Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB) due to limited available work with his employer. The agency verified both incomes and their source. However, in calculating the monthly income, the agency combined the earned income with the UIB and entered the total as earned income in determining the allotment. Because the UIB was not entered as unearned income, earned income deductions were allowed for the UIB resulting in an agency error overissuance.
6. The agency incorrectly calculated weekly wages as bi-weekly wages resulting in an agency error overissuance.
7. The recipient reported and the agency verified the dependent care expenses of a three person household. However, the agency entered the dependent care expenses as legally obligated child support, thus deducting that amount from the total gross income. The actual total gross income was more than the maximum limit resulting in an agency error overissuance for a household that was totally ineligible.
8. The agency removed the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) even though the client received a LIEAP check in February of the same year. This resulted in an Agency Error underissuance.

## What's in a Name?

### Food Stamps name changes to Food and Nutrition Services

Earlier this summer, Governor Mike Easley signed Senate Bill 836, which changes the name of the Food Stamp program to the Food and Nutrition Services Program. The name change reflects the elimination of paper Food Stamps and the use of electronic benefit transfer cards to access benefits. The change also more accurately describes the program that provides food on the table for low income individuals and families, and also has an emphasis on choosing nutritious food to grow healthy children and maintain good health for adults and seniors. We believe the marriage of the words "food" and "nutrition" sends a very positive message to the target audience for the program. If there is still any stigma in the community associated with the name "Food Stamps", hopefully the name change will completely dispel it and encourage eligible people in North Carolina to take advantage of this vital service. Every North Carolinian needs food and good nutrition in order to be the best we can be.



## ***Recent Policy Changes***

### **DSS Adm. Letter. 2-2007**

**Effective: June 1, 2007**

On June 30, 2007, contracts between the Division, Employment Security Commission and the Community College system ended in 25 counties. Effective July 1, 2007, the Food and Nutrition Services Employment and Training Program was modified in the 25 counties to provide more effective and efficient services to the individuals served.

### **DSS Adm. Letter. 3-2007**

**Effective: July 1, 2007**

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) received the data contract for SDX/BENDEX/SVES/SOLQ from the Social Security Administration (SSA) effective July 1, 2007. The SSA has clarified for DHHS that the State Agency is only authorized to use information obtained via SOLQ for the purpose of administering the Medicaid, Special Assistance, TANF (includes Child Care) and Food and Nutrition Services programs pursuant to 1137(b) of the Social Security Act. Neither state nor county DSS staff may utilize the data from SOLQ for any other purpose or program. The SSA directed NC DHHS to ensure we comply with this agreement effective July 1, 2007.

### **DSS Adm. Letter. 4-2007**

**Effective: October 1, 2007**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently amended North Carolina's waiver for the face-to-face interview for Semi-Annual Recertification and the telephone interview for Simplified Recertification households. N.C. will no longer be able to recertify households solely through recertification forms submitted at a 12-month interval. N.C. must conduct either a face-to-face or a telephone interview at least once in every 12-month interval. Telephone interviews may be utilized without the need to establish hardship.

### **DSS Change Notice 3-2007**

**Effective: July 1, 2007**

The purpose of this change is to include an update of Figure 241-2—N.C. Food and Nutrition Services Work Programs. The list is revised as a result of the removal of Employment and Training requirements from 25 counties. These counties are now listed as exempt. Please note that Figure 240-2 has been renamed Figure 241-2.



## **Meet Your Information Support Staff**



Seated left to right: Belinda Autry, Coordinator; Laura Bryant, Supervisor; and Thelma Hassell, Consultant. Standing left to right: Larry Davis, Consultant; Tameka Clark, Administrative Support; Ruth Elliot, Consultant, Wayne Chaison, Consultant; and Manny Baksh, Consultant.